

# Sex Offenses

*Sex offenses refers to six crimes of a sexual nature: prostitution and solicitation, indecent assault, indecent exposure, peeping & spying, annoying & accosting, and obscene telephone calls. Rape is not included because it is a Part I crime.*

Crime	1999	2000
Prostitution & Solicitation	10	2
Indecent Assault	35	26
Indecent Exposure	50	36
Peeping & Spying	31	16
Annoying & Accosting	17	27
Obscene Phone Calls	40	28

## Prostitution and Solicitation

Prostitution is most commonly associated with “streetwalking”—that is, prostitutes working the streets and corners, looking for clients to pick them up in cars. This type of prostitution has long been considered a sign of urban decay and social disorganization. Consequently, the Cambridge Police Department’s Special Investigations Unit has aggressively targeted both “streetwalkers” and “johns” (the streetwalkers’ clients) over the past decade with seasonal stings. Their efforts have nearly eradicated the presence of visible streetwalking in the city of Cambridge, evidenced by the continuing decline.

Less visible, but no less serious, is the type of prostitution that involves high-class escort services, health clubs, or massage parlors fronting for prostitution rings. The Special Investigations Unit made arrests of individuals from two escort services in March of this year. Meetings were set up at the Marriott with Centerfold Playmates Escorts and Erotica Escorts. When the women came to the hotel they were arrested for prostitution.

## Indecent Assault

Indecent assault involves the unwanted touching of one person by another in a private area or with sexual overtones. In about 50% of incidents, the offender and victim know each other. Incidents that show that the offender attempted or intended to rape the victim are counted as rapes, not as indecent assaults. In addition, any force or injury would change the type of crime to aggravated assault rather than indecent assault.

Indecent assault totals tend to fluctuate. This year’s total is significantly lower than last year’s total, but significantly higher than 1998’s total. Most of the acquaintance incidents involve employees who were

harassed by their employers or co-workers and young girls assaulted by older males. Many incidents involved females being approached from behind and grabbed on the buttocks. This is the most common form of “blitz” style indecent assault, although no real patterns developed this year.

## Indecent Exposure

There was a 28% decrease in indecent exposure this year, which is good news after a sharp increase last year. The bad news is that the crime is increasingly accompanied by a disturbing trend involving more aggressive behavior than simple “flashing.” In at least 17 cases, a suspect (a different person in each case) was reported to have masturbated in a public place, in front of multiple witnesses.

One would expect that such behavior would be largely confined to intoxicated or mentally ill vagrants, but in a fair number of incidents, witnesses described the suspect as well groomed or well-dressed and otherwise respectful.

The majority of cases, however, involved homeless or intoxicated people urinating in public places, and two couples showing too much indiscretion in public bathrooms. M.I.T. made two arrests of individuals engaged in sexual activity in restrooms.

## Peeping & Spying

Peeping and spying offenders peer through the windows of houses or apartments, generally at night. Most of the incidents of 2000 seem unrelated except for a few incidents in the Peabody and Agassiz neighborhoods that match a pattern that originally emerged in the fall of 1998.

In the fall of 1998, an unusual pattern of peeping & spying emerged. It involved the usual scenario of an offender peering through the windows of houses and apartments, except the offender was male and so were his victims. A suspect was identified, but was never arrested. This year, two similar incidents were reported in this area. In both cases, the male victim heard a noise outside, looked, and saw a male suspect outside masturbating.